

LETTERS
TO THE
INHABITANTS
OF
NORTHUMBERLAND

AND ITS
NEIGHBOURHOOD,
*On Subjects interesting to the AUTHOR,
and to THEM.*

PART I.

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L. L. D. F. R. S. &c.

Nunquamne reponam?
Juvenal.

NORTHUMBERLAND:

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TO THE
INHABITANTS
OF
NORTHUMBERLAND
AND ITS
NEIGHBOURHOOD.

LETTER I.

Of my Situation as an Alien.

My Friends and Neighbours,

WHEN any person becomes an object of more suspicion than he wishes to lie under, he naturally appeals to those who have had the best opportunity of knowing him; and if they be satisfied with respect to his conduct, it is the best means of satisfying others. This unpleasant character of a *suspected person*, hostile to the country in which I live, aggravated by the consideration of its having afforded me protection when I could not live with comfort, or even with safety, in my native country, you well know I have borne for some time.

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I think

I think it barely possible for a man who has, in the five years that I have been among you, done so little of an offensive nature, to have become the object of more suspicion and rancour than I have incurred. The most popular writer in this country, and who receives the greatest countenance from the persons in power, says, "I hope I shall see the malignant old Tartuff
" of Northumberland begging his bread thro' the streets
" of Philadelphia, and ending his days in the poor
" house, without a friend to close his eyes." The curse of Ernulphus in Tristram Shandy does not exceed this.

In order to keep as clear as possible, and as free from suspicion, with respect to the politics of this country, I did not chuse even to be naturalized, and the President, to whom I mentioned my objection to it, much approved of my resolution. But I find that this precaution has not availed me any thing.

Being an *alien*, the President has been again and again called upon to carry into execution against me the late act of congress respecting aliens. It has been said, that "if what I have done passes unnoticed by government, it will operate as the greatest encouragement that
" its enemies have ever received. They will say, and
" justly too, that tho' the President is armed with power, he is afraid to make use of it, and that the alien law
" is a mere bug bear."

I hope, however, to convince you that such an order would be cruel and unjust; for that I am not so very dangerous a person as this writer and his party suppose.

That I may conduct this address to you with some regard to method, I shall first consider what is objected to me from what *I am*, and then from what *I have done*. After this I shall tell you what I *think*, both with respect to your government in general, and the late administration of it, with the reasons on which my
opinions

opinions are founded; and thus you will know better than you can do at present what to think of me, and of my accusers too. In doing this I shall, with Pope,

———pour out all myself as plain,
As honest Shippen, or as old Montagne.

In the first place, then, I am to consider what is objected to me from what *I am*. In some respects neither praise nor blame will attach to what a man *is*, because it was not in his power to have been any other. It will not, for instance, be objected me, at least as an unfavourable circumstance, that I am a native of England, even by those whose greatest boast it is that they are native Americans. Nor shall I be censured for saying, what I always have done, and what with great truth I repeat, that I am proud of my native country, and am as sincere a well wisher to it as any American can be to this country. It does not depend on ourselves, but upon our parents, and upon God, who assigns to every man his proper station and duty, where we shall be born.

But of what importance is it where I was born, or whence I came; whether I dropped among you from the clouds, or rose out of the earth. Here I am. Here is my family. Here is my property, and every thing else that can attach a man to any place. Let any person only view my house, my garden, my library, my laboratory, and the other conveniences with which I am surrounded, and let him withal consider my age, and the little disposition that I have shewn to ramble any whither, and say whether any person among yourselves, or in the United States, could remove with more difficulty, or with more loss, than I should do. And yet there are great numbers who would think no more of an order to send me out of the country (which it is in the power of the President to give, and even without deigning to give me a hearing) than if I was a pauper, without

without house or home ; and they would rejoice as much in it as if I had been a burden to the district.

It is surely, also, as probable that I shall have a real attachment to a country, and the government of it, to which I came *voluntarily*, and from a preference of them to any other, as if I had been a native, and consequently had had no choice in the case. Is it supposed by my adversaries that I have any predilection for England, or the government of it, merely because I was born there ?

If I am an alien myself, my sons are naturalized ; and must not a father feel for them ? Can he be an enemy to the country to which they belong ?

You will smile to hear my accuser say that I live in "a *shed*, which I dignify with the name a *house* ;" when you know that, with respect both to convenience and elegance, it is superior to any house in the county, and excepting Philadelphia, and its neighbourhood there are perhaps few that are equal to it in the whole State. It would be a better founded objection to say, that its appearance is too Aristocratical for the habitation of a Democrat. My library and philosophical apparatus are, without boasting, superior to any thing of the kind in this country, and of much more value than my house.

He also says that, "like Mr. Vaughan, I shall "leave this country in dudgeon the moment I can "do it with a prospect of living elsewhere with safety "and in ease." You who know the provision I have made for spending my days with comfort here, are better judges of the probability of this than any person at a distance can be. Mr. Cobbet's account of myself, and my conduct, in his pamphlet on the subject of my emigration, has just as much of truth in it as his account of my house and my intentions.

It is, however, most seriously objected to me that I am a *French citizen*, and have adopted *French principles* ;

iples; and in the opinion of many persons those principles are truly diabolical, so that I might as well have come to you from the infernal regions. This I feel to be dangerous ground; but having undertaken to give you the best account that I can of what I *am*, I shall, if you will have the courage to follow me, venture upon it in my next Letter. In the mean time, I am,

My Friends and Neighbours,

Your sincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

LETTER II.

Of French Citizenship, and French Principles.

My Friends and Neighbours,

IN my last I promised to consider what is objected to me as a *Citizen of France*. This I find to be an accusation of a very serious nature. For on this account alone it is taken for granted that I *must* be an enemy to this country, which for some time past has been in a state nearly bordering on open hostility with France. Mr. H—— considers it as a sufficient proof of Mr. Cooper's being inimical to this country, that, on a late occasion, he was supposed to have acted in concert with *me*; as if I was not only avowedly hostile to this country myself, but must necessarily communicate

communicate the same hostile disposition to all persons who have any communication with me,

But, my friends, hear a little reason on this subject. You have heard a great deal that is not reason, but mere passionate declamation upon it; and especially attend to the circumstance of the *time* in which I was made a citizen of France, and the occasion of it. It was simply as a well known friend of general liberty, in consequence of my having written in defence of the liberties of America, as well as those of France, and as one who had suffered in the cause.

Consider also that at that time there was no suspicion of a war between England and France. The French king was then living, the constitution of France was then reduced to a limited monarchy resembling that of England, and other Englishmen, and among them Mr. Wilberforce, a fast friend of Mr. Pitt, were made citizens of France. He was distinguished in this manner on account of his taking the lead in the measures that were adopted for the abolition of the slave trade. It was also, I believe, at the same time that your General Washington received the same compliment; and surely you do not for this suspect *him* of being your enemy.

In these circumstances it is very possible that any native American might not have thought it at all disreputable to have been made a citizen of France, obnoxious as the character happens to be at present. I certainly consider it as an honour to me, and think that I have more reason to be proud of it than of being a *native* of any country whatever. I wish I had done more to deserve it.

But it is alleged by those who wish to make the most of every circumstance that can be construed to my prejudice, that, besides being a citizen of France, I was elected a member of the Conventional Assembly, appointed for the purpose of framing a new constitution

tion for that detested country and this implies a nearer relation to it. To this, also, I plead guilty. I was elected in a great number of the departments of France, and was informed that I should have been elected in many more, but that it was well understood that I certainly should be in others. I should have been elected for the department of Paris, if it had not been for the opposition of Robespierre, who very properly objected to it, as not fit for any foreigner. I saw the honourable proposal in the same light. I was pleased with the compliment, but declined the office; and what could the proudest native American have done more? These circumstances, I am willing to think, will be deemed to operate as some extenuation of my offence.

Consider, also, the change that has taken place with respect to *opinions*, as well as other things, in the last five years among yourselves. When I came to this country, in the year 1794, I found the people in general in unison with me on this subject. On all public occasions, *Success to the arms of France* was never omitted among the toasts that were drank. Complaints were at that time universally made against the insolence and injustice of the English, and even an open rupture with England was generally expected. There was no complaint of *French principles* then, tho' they were the same that they are now. They were universally considered as the principles of *general liberty*, and the same with *American principles*, that is *republican*, in opposition to *monarchical*. The change, therefore, that has taken place is not in me, but in the people here; and considering that old men do not easily change their sentiments, or attachments, if I must change, you must allow me more time, and this I cannot pretend to fix; but I shall be as expeditious as I can.

If by French principles be meant the principles of the *French government*, I do not see where they differ
in

in any thing that is essential from those of your own. In neither of the two constitutions are there any hereditary honours or powers. All offices are elective, and for a moderate time. In both there are three distinct powers, an executive, a senate, and a house of representatives; tho' not called by the same names, or connected in quite the same manner; and in neither of the countries is there any form of religion established by law.

The great outline of the two constitutions is therefore the very same. In some other things they differ, as in their executive there are *five* persons, and in yours only *one*. But which of them is best adapted to answer its end experience only can decide. Tho' each has its peculiar advantages, as in a future letter I may shew, and I am disposed to give the preference to that of this country; yet as far as I can see, either of them may do very well, and whatever is found to be inconvenient in either of them may be changed at a proper time. So great an agreement as this might be expected to lay a foundation for friendship, especially as the French nation, with whatever view (which it does not behove any state to scrutinize very narrowly) gave you material assistance in asserting your liberties, and then followed your example in asserting their own; changing their monarchical government for a republican one.

The most opprobrious appellation with which those who call themselves *Federalists* reproach us, as a consequence of our adopting French principles, is that of *democrats*. Democracy, they seem to think, the greatest of all crimes, and the persons chargeable with it not fit to be tolerated in any regular government. But my friends, pray consider what *democracy* really means. It signifies nothing more than *the government of the people*, or a constitution in which the people chuse all their magistrates, and in which the magistrates are accountable to the people, or their representatives, for their conduct

duct in office, which is exactly the constitution of this country. Every man, therefore, who is not a democrat is an enemy to this constitution. What strange and arbitrary meanings our enemies may annex to this word I cannot tell, nor do I believe they know themselves; but I have not yet met with any democrat who used the word in any other sense than that which I have now given to it.

Our enemies will tell you that by democracy we mean a state of anarchy and confusion, a government by mobs, and an equalization of all property. But can any of you really believe that a person of my small property would wish for such a state as this, or that a person of my age would like to scramble among the strongest of you for what I could get. If that was to be the case, I should expect to be very soon turned out of my house, and left to starve among you. If you can be made to believe this of us, you are easily imposed upon indeed, and might be made to fear lest the sky should fall, that fire might be set to your river, or that an army of French cannibals may cross the Atlantic in a fleet of balloons, land on the blue mountain, and eat up all your children for their first breakfast. For these are not more improbable than the other.

As by democracy we mean a government of the *people*, and not of the *mob*, so by *equality* we mean an equality of *rights*, and of power both to acquire property, and to keep it; the equality that actually exists in this country. This has been explained so often that our enemies must know it to be our whole meaning.

You are angry at the French for their captures of your ships, as you were before at the English on the same account, and I believe you had reason in both cases. But do not lay the blame on French or English *principles*, but on the administration of the countries. The French themselves are far from approving of the
C conduct

conduct of all their rulers, and still less of all that are employed by them. Why then must I be supposed to approve of all the atrocities of Robespierre, with which I am continually charged, merely because I am an adopted citizen of France. I condemn them as much as you can do, and hope they will not occur again. I find, however, that, in the opinion of some, I must bear the blame of all that has been done in France, even since I have had no communication with that country, or knowledge of what passes in it, and perhaps of all the crimes that may be committed there after I am dead.

But they who are the loudest in their exclamation against French principles, appear to me to know nothing of any principles of government. For it is impossible to reprobate the general principles of the French government, and not include those of the American government in the same censure. It may, therefore, be fairly presumed that they are dissatisfied with this government, and wish to overturn it. This would give me the greatest concern. I came hither from the preference I gave to it; and any material change in it would certainly, old as I am, drive me away again. With your immortal Franklin, I say *Where liberty is, there is my country*. Of the American constitution, I therefore say, *Esto perpetua*.

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER III.

Of my Right to treat of Subjects of civil Policy, and the Advantages I have had for acquiring Knowledge of this Kind.

My Friends and Neighbours,

HAVING considered what is objected to me on account of what I *am*, I proceed to what I have *done*; and indeed this is of much more importance than the other. For what does it signify what any man *is*, or what character he sustains, if he do nothing in consequence of it. But it is urged against me that I have not been an idle spectator of what is passing; for that I actually busy myself in the politics of the country, and with these it is said I have nothing to do.

Before I inform you what I *have done*, or what I have *not done*, give me leave to observe that, tho' I am an *alien*, I cannot allow that I have no right to have an opinion with respect to the government of the country in which I live, or to express my opinion, in words or in writing, if I be so disposed.

Can any man, whose person and property are in any country, be wholly unconcerned about the conduct of its affairs. Tho' a man may be a mere *passenger* in a ship, must he be content to see it suffer, or sink, and not give his opinion how it might be saved, because he is not the *owner*, the *captain*, or any *officer* on board acting under him. I have heard, indeed, of a man who when he was alarmed with the cry of fire in the house in which he was sleeping, said "what is that to me, I am only a lodger. But his conduct is not generally thought worthy of imitation.

When

When Dean Swift, who was an Englishman residing in Ireland, wrote about the politics of that country, and by his *Drapier's Letters* prevented the circulation of Wood's halfpence, was there any complaint of his interference on account of his being a *foreigner*? And had I done any thing pleasing to those who now complain of my conduct, their complaints would not have been heard. Do the same persons complain of the writings of Peter Porcupine, who, as an alien, stands in the same predicament with myself? Had I, like him written any thing in praise of the measures of administration, I might have done it without any censure, as well as he.

On the principles of my accusers, had I discovered a certain method of preventing or curing the yellow fever, or of destroying the Hessian fly, I must not have divulged it because I am an alien. But if I be at liberty to do *good*, it must be what I myself deem to be good, and in my own way also, and with respect to all subjects indiscriminately, that of politics not excepted. Another must not think, judge, or act, for me.

If I had nothing at stake in the country (and I have much more than thousands of native Americans) is it possible for a man to see any company, in which, from the present interesting state of public affairs, there is hardly any other topic of conversation than politics, or read your newspapers, in which topics of this kind are continually discussed, and form no opinion about them; and if he have an opinion, can he forbear to let his acquaintance know what that opinion is. when perhaps they are inquisitive, and wish to know it.

I have another apology to make for the conduct that is objected to me. Having never had much capacity for the more *active* pursuits of life, I had from very early years a turn for *speculation* on every subject
that

that has become before me; and they have been very various, as my writings will shew. Among them *politics*, in such a country as England, could not be excluded, any more than *religion*, or *philosophy*. And being now old, and of course less active, I am more disposed to *think*, and, having more experience, I presume I am rather better qualified for it than ever. Have the candour, therefore, to bear with my thinking, and with my talking and writing too, as you do with respect to other old men, tho' you should be of opinion that what I think, speak, or write, is not so much to the purpose as you could wish it to be.

As I own I am sometimes disposed to think, and to speak on the subject of politics, as well as on other topics, you must excuse my vanity, if I imagine that I am in some measure not unqualified for it. At least I have, in the course of a very various life, had the means of acquiring some political knowledge.

I was seven years in the family of the Marquis of Lansdown, which was altogether a political house, where I daily saw, and conversed with, the first politicians not only of England, but from all parts of Europe. And, independent of that connexion, I have had more or less intercourse with most of the political living characters whose names you have heard mentioned, and with many that you have not heard of. Besides the principal politicians of England, both in and out of the ministry, I was personally acquainted with some of the most eminent in France, both before and since the revolution; as Mr. Turgot, Mr. Neckar, Mr. Brissot, Mr. Pethion, and the Duc de Rochfocault, who was my constant correspondent from the time that I was in France to that of his unfortunate death.

I am sensible that what I am now saying will have the air of boasting. But if, as Solomon says, there be
a time

a time for all things, my present situation may justify it in me, as a similar one did in the apostle Paul.

Tho' my writings, as you may see by the catalogue of them, relate chiefly to theology, philosophy, or general literature, some of them are political, especially my *Essay on the first principles of government* and my *Lectures on History and General policy*, which are read in some of your colleges. As well for the composition of this work, as to enlarge my knowledge of the subject, there are few political publications of much note that I have not read, and with several of the later and the most eminent writers on subjects of policy I was personally acquainted, as the Abbe Raynal, and Dr. Adam Smith, the author of the celebrated treatise on the *wealth of nations*. If, therefore, I have no knowledge of the subject of politics, it has not been for want of the means, or the opportunity of acquiring it.

I should hardly have been thought of as a proper person for a member of the conventional assembly of France, chosen in what are reckoned the best times of their revolution, for the express purpose of forming a new constitution of government for that country, if I had not had some character for knowledge of this kind. My knowledge of theology, or chemistry, would not have recommended me to that situation.

Your President, with whom I am well acquainted when he was ambassador in England, and with whom I corresponded from that time till he was advanced to his present situation, will excuse me if on this occasion I quote his authority. Having in one of my publications declared my preference of one of his political maxims to that which was maintained by Dr. Franklin, he says in one of his letters, that he considers it as "a compliment which he holds very precious." With Dr. Franklin, who was as much a political as a philosophical character, I was intimately acquainted many years.

His

His letters to me would have made a very large volume. Three of them he has published in his miscellaneous works.

Notwithstanding these advantages which I have had for public information, and the observation and experience of a long life, many of the young men of this country, being *native Americans*, think themselves, I doubt not, much wiser than I pretend to be, and will make very light of any opinions of mine. Be it so. It is in the order of Providence that succeeding generations should grow wiser than the preceding ones; and if the youngest of the native Americans will teach me any thing, I shall not think myself too old to learn.

The great principles of sound policy are not, in my opinion, above the comprehension of young men, and even such as have not had the advantage of a learned education. The circumstances that contribute to the flourishing state of a country, which is the proper object of all civil policy, are easily known, and the operation of them in all particular cases would be as easily understood, did not prejudice and passion mislead men's judgments. But in consequence of this, the schemes of some of the most profound politicians have brought nations to the very brink of ruin. What is it that has been effected by the great politicians of Europe in the last century, besides involving their respective countries in a state of perpetual war? When has peace been made, but when the people were so exhausted that war could not have been carried on any longer? And in consequence of these violent exertions, are they not all loaded with debts which neither the present nor any future generation will ever be able to pay, and which must hasten the period of *bankruptcy*, and *revolution*, which they so much dread. Can you contemplate all this and call it *wisdom*?

Since, however, the subject of politics has not in itself any greater difficulty attending it than even young
men

men may surmount; and since it is chiefly *passion* that misleads men's judgment with respect to it, it is surely the less presumption in old men, whose passions are generally more under the command of reason than those of young men, to think and write upon it.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of what I have done with Respect to the Politics of this Country.

My Friends, and Neighbours,

THO' I have not been prevented by any peculiar difficulty that there is in the subject of *Politics*, or by the supposed impropriety of an alien attending to it, from taking a part in your political differences, I have had other views and pursuits; and having had much leisure in this country, I have done so much in other ways, that I think I can convince you that I cannot possibly have been that busy, intriguing, and dangerous politician, that I am represented to have been.

Of my publications in England, which I believe are about an hundred, very few relate to politics. My publications in this country are not less than *twelve*, all theological or philosophical, besides three articles on the *Transactions of the Society at Philadelphia*, and eleven that are printed in the *Medical Repository* at New-York; three more are sent, but are not yet printed;

printed; and I have four or five articles ready to send to the Society at Philadelphia. *

Besides these works, I have just printed in this place a large volume intituled *a Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with those of the Hindoos and other ancient nations*. I have composed a *Continuation of my Church history to the present time*, which will make six volumes 8vo, and about as many of *Notes on the Old and New Testament*, part indeed composed in England, but destroyed at the riots in Bermingham, and recomposed here. You will please to observe that in merely writing *much*, there is no other merit than that of *industry*, a quality which I believe my greatest enemies will allow me.

Tho' I have written so much since I have resided in this place, I generally spend the greatest part of my time in my laboratory, making experiments, the object of which is not gain, but the extension of natural knowledge. Judge then yourselves whether it has been *possible* for me to have given much attention to the peculiar politics of this country.

It is true, as I have observed, that I could not help forming some *opinion* on subjects that are continually before me; and I will not deny that it accords better with my former principles and habits of thinking to take part with those who disapprove of the late measures of your government, and are generally called *Democrats*, than with those who call themselves *Federalists*, whose language and sentiments appear to

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me

* In philosophy I am combating the principles of the *French chemistry*; and as every thing that is *French* is now unpopular, the *Federalists* may be expected to wish me success. Of this however I am as confident as the allied powers are that they shall conquer France, and overturn its republican government, tho' at present almost all chemists in this country, as well as in Europe, are strongly attached to it.

To the Inhabitants

me to be very congenial to those of the friends of monarchy, and high maxims of government, in England. My political opinions, however, I have not been forward to obtrude on others; and if the private opinions of one man, and that an alien, can shake any country, it cannot stand long.

I do not know, nor have I any reason to believe, that any one of you has changed his opinion in politics in consequence of my residence among you. Whatever be your sentiments in this respect, they are wholly independent of me. You also well know, that my opinions, have had no more influence on any of my countrymen in this place than they have had on yourselves.

Tho' what I have done in theology and philosophy may seem sufficient to have occupied me wholly, I will now gratify my enemies by informing them, that notwithstanding this, I have actually found time, both to *say* and to *do* something with respect to the politics of the day, and something which without my own voluntary confession, they could not have found out. In the *Aurora*, that receptable, as it is considered for all seditious and treasonable matter,* for Feb. 26 and 27, 1788, there is an article of mine, which will be thought to be of a suspicious complexion, signed *a Quaker in politics*. But to save them the trouble
of

* Tho' I see almost all the newspapers that are printed in Philadelphia, it is to this that I give the preference. In England I was a reader of the *Morning Chronicle*, which was then patronized by the friends of liberty in that country; but I do not think that, in its best times, it was superior to the *Aurora* with respect to just sentiment, valuable information, or good composition. The Federalists of this country, who seldom, I believe, read this paper, must be ignorant of many things that it behoves them to know. Having said this, I must expect to be made answerable for every thing that ever has been, or ever will be printed in the *Aurora*.

of looking for it, I shall reprint the whole of it at the end of these Letters. This, however, is all that I have written till the present time.

But tho' I have written nothing more than this single article myself; yet approving of Mr. Cooper's *Essays* in your Gazette, I contributed one dollar towards printing a few extra copies of one of them, before it was known they would all be reprinted in the form of a pamphlet. However, to make amends for this fault, and to shew my impartiality, and my desire to promote the free discussion of subjects of importance to the community, I here promise that if any Federalist will give as comprehensive and as dispassionate a view of what they have to advance in support of the late measures, as Mr. Cooper has done against them, I will give another dollar towards that publication. I fear, however, it will not be in the power of Mr. Cooper's antagonist to fulfil the conditions on which I make this promise. Persons writing in support of any government, being sure of protection, if not of reward, are apt to indulge themselves in intemperate language, as a mark of their zeal in the cause; while the dread of penal laws naturally makes the oppugner of them timid, and consequently more guarded and decent in his language, mindful of the Latin adage, *leniter in modo fortiter in re*.

The writer who styles himself *Massachusetts*, gives me more merit than I am entitled to with respect to Mr. Cooper's publication, when he says that "I took great pains to circulate it, that I travelled thro' the country for the purpose, and that I was, in fact, the patron of it." The fact was, that I never saw any of the papers till after their publication, and all that I did with respect to the circulation of the extra copies was to carry a bundle of them from the printer's to the house of a brother democrat in this town, which might as well have been done by the printer's boy.

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I do not, however, say this to exculpate myself from any crime. For I consider both the writing of the letters in question, and the circulation of them, as praise worthy actions. Massachusetts calls Mr. Cooper an *English Jacobin*, but this is merely a term of reproach. The principles that Mr. Cooper has maintained are clearly those of the American constitution. Whoever denies this, either does not understand those principles, or is an enemy to them ; and as the subject is sufficiently intelligible, the latter is the more probable supposition of the two.

The paragraphs which this writer selects, as particularly obnoxious, I entirely approve. For certainly the man who should wish to extend the power of the President of this country beyond the bounds prescribed by the constitution, could not take better steps to gain his end than those that are pointed out by Mr. Cooper. At the same time, it is not denied, nor does Mr. Cooper deny it, that the same things might be done from other motives. But, as he observes, we have nothing to do with men's *motives*, but only with the *tendency of their measures* ; and of this we must form our judgment from considering their nature, and the circumstances of the case.

For what I did in this business Massachusetts, who considers it as a crime of a peculiarly heinous nature, says " I stand charged before the great " tribunal of the American people ! " I do not, however, consider an anonymous writer in a newspaper as the *American people*. But whenever this people, whom I respect, shall arraign any part of my conduct by their authorized officers, in due form, I shall be ready to meet the accusation. In the mean time, these letters may be sufficient.

That I may leave nothing on my conscience relating to this subject of what I have *done*, I will farther confess that, averse as I generally am to public meetings,

ings, which are often attended with much noise, to which from the habits of a studious life I am much averse, I was prevailed upon to join in two celebrations of the 4th of July, one of them two years ago, in a grove near this town, and this year in another near Sunbury, at both of which republican or democratical toasts were drank, and where the late measures of administration were not praised.

If I could think that it would avail me any thing, I might perhaps plead that, if I have done mischief in some respects, I have done good in others. But with those who have no knowledge beyond that of the politics of the day, and a very superficial knowledge even of them, pounds of merit of any other kind would be outweighed by grains of political, or rather of party demerit. Let a man who is suspected of what any party terms *sedition* deserve ever so well of his country, or of mankind at large, in other respects, no more mercy would be shewn him on that account, than was shewn by Robespierre in France. Had I made discoveries in science equal to those of Newton, or had had the philanthropy of Howard, they would not have exempted me from the coarsest abuse that the English language can furnish. A detected thief, or a fraudulent forger of bank bills, would have met with more favour than has been shewn to me.

I do not recollect any thing more that I have done with respect to the politics of this country since I have come into it, except writing a reply to a virulent censure of me for holding a correspondence with a friend in France on occasion of a letter to me intercepted and published with notes in England, and republished with additional and more virulent remarks in this country. This reply I published in several of your newspapers, and I believe it gave general satisfaction. I shall, therefore, soon proceed to inform you what I really think of the political state of this country,

country, and I shall do it with perfect freedom, but with that coolness which I hope is habitual to me. I only wish that what I write may be read with the same temper. But before I do this I shall in my next make some farther observations concerning the *intercepted Letters*, and *abusive writings* in general, and those which respect myself in particular,

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of the intercepted Letters, and, of the French Revolution.

My Friends and Neighbours,

A GREAT clamour was made some time ago about the intercepted letters mentioned in my last. It was on that occasion that I wrote the substance of these *Letters*; but being unwilling, without more urgent cause, to appear as a *political writer*, I withheld them from the press, and contented myself with writing a short advertisement, merely in answer to a charge of being a spy in the interest of France.

To decline all particular discussions, I then observed, that I was not answerable for what any person might think proper to write to me. But this business being again brought before the public, I will freely acknowledge that my friend's letter gave me great pleasure; and the like I have received from others before and since that time, written by the same hand, and in the same spirit, tho' no two men think exactly alike,
or

or would express themselves in exactly the same manner. Mr. Stone, being a younger man, will naturally be more sanguine, and write with more warmth than I should be disposed to do. But, my friends, read the intercepted letters without regarding the *notes* that accompanied the publication, and then say what there is in them that can give just offence to any American.

Mr. Stone is a person who, together with myself, earnestly wished for a reformation of abuses in the English government, in order to prevent an entire *revolution*, which we did not think was wanted there. He now sees, or thinks he sees, that no such reformation is to be expected; and therefore wishes a revolution to take place, thinking it to be absolutely necessary for the good of the people. I own that I am now inclined to his opinion. I sincerely wish (if the genuine spirit of the original constitution cannot be revived, which would no doubt be the best for that country) for some more radical change than I have hitherto thought necessary, tho' I wish it may be effected peaceably, and without the interference of any foreign power.

Tho' during the American war it was voted, in the house of Commons, that "the power of the crown "had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished;" it is evident that, so far from being diminished, it has kept increasing since that time; and how far it may go it is impossible to say. The forms of the British constitution are so far from being any real check on the power of the crown, as in theory they ought to be, that they are the most convenient instruments of it; the court, as is well known, always commanding a majority in the house of Commons, and being equally sure of the support of the Lords in all their measures.

Seeing that, for want, as I conceive, of a due representation of the people, a respectable class of English

glifh citizens are frowned upon, and their fituation uncomfortable, and hardly fafe, I fincerely wifh them relieved. My correspondent does the fame, and moreover expreffes his fatisfaction in the progreff that the *revolutionary fpirit* is making in other parts of Europe, where it is ftill more wanted. Now, pray, what offence can this juftly give in *America*, where a fimilar revolution has actually taken place, and where the great benefits of it are every day experienced? Why fhould you take umbrage at other countries following the example that you have fet them?

Shocked at the enormities which have been committed in France, and which no perfons lament fo much as the friends of liberty in every country, it has become fashionable with many to exclaim againft *all revolutions* indifcriminately, and all the *principles* that lead to them; and in the Englifh parliament a wifh has been openly expreffed for the reftoration of the ancient government, and the ancient religion, of France. But, furely, they who hold this language muft either be avowed advocates of arbitrary power, or have forgotten the ftate of France before the laft revolution.

No writer whatever expreffes a greater dread of every thing tending to revolution than Mr. Robifon, profeflor of Natural Philofophy in the univerfity of Edinburgh, in his book entitled *Proofs of a confpiracy againft all the religions and governments of Europe*, in which he makes me one of thofe confpirators. But even this writer could not help acknowledging the exiftence of fuch abufes in the government of France as were abfolutely infupportable, and fuch as would abundantly juftify the fubjects of it in attempting its fubverfion. It may not be amifs to bring before you a part of what this writer fays on the fubject.

After enumerating all the caufes of corruption in government, he fays p. 48 “ Perhaps there never was
“ a nation where all thefe co-operating caufes had
“ acquired

“acquired greater strength than in France. Oppressi-
 “ons of all kinds were at their height. The luxuries
 “of life were enjoyed exclusively by the upper classes,
 “and this in the highest degree of refinement; so that
 “the desires of the rest were whetted to the utmost.
 “Religion appeared in its worst form, and seemed cal-
 “culated solely for procuring establishments for the
 “younger sons of an insolent and useless noblesse.
 “The morals of the higher orders of the clergy and of
 “the laity were equally corrupt.—The whole nation
 “became infidel—The misconduct of administration,
 “and the abuses of the public treasure, were every
 “day growing more impudent and glaring, &c. &c.
 “In fact the king of France was an absolute monarch,
 “and the subjects were slaves.” p. 264.

“There is no denying the insolence and oppressi-
 “on of the crown, and of the nobles, nor the misery
 “and slavery of the people; nor that there was suffi-
 “cient provocation for a total change of measures and
 “of principles.” p. 301. And is not this the very
 thing that the French nation, now so much execrated,
 have done? For what, then, are they to be so much
 condemned?

You will observe, however, that this writer as-
 cribes the revolution in France, in a great measure, to
 the example set by this country, to which it is suffi-
 ciently evident from his manner of expressing himself,
 that he is no friend. “Their officers and soldiers, who
 “returned from America,” he says “imported *American*
 “*principles*, and in every company found hearers who
 “listened with delight and regret to the fascinating tale
 “of American independance,” p. 263.

Be assured that the enemies of the French revo-
 lution are in reality no less the enemies of the Ame-
 rican, as they both arose from the same principles.
 The immediate stimulus was oppression, which was
 unspeakably greater in France than it was in this coun-
 try.

try. And if ever monarchy be firmly established in France, the liberty and independence of America will be in imminent danger. But I have no fear on the subject, I rejoice in both revolutions alike.*

If you read any authentic account of the state of the other European kingdoms (I except, however, Denmark and Sweden) you will be satisfied that the abuses of government and the oppression of the people, are got to an extreme. Germany has long groaned under the oppression of a haughty nobility, and there have been frequent risings of the peasants to better their condition. In the time of Luther more than a hundred thousand had recourse to arms in Swabia; but wanting good leaders, and ill provided with stores and ammunition, they were soon suppressed. Both
Spain

* From the commencement of the American war I wished for the independence of this country, being firmly persuaded that it would be for the real advantage of England, as well as of these States, and this is now, I believe, almost universally acknowledged to be the case. I am equally well persuaded that it would be for the benefit of the people of England (I do not say for the glory of the Monarch) to have nothing to do with the dominion of the East or the West Indies. I once mentioned this opinion to Sir George Savile, adding, that it would have been much better for England never to have had the possession of Gibraltar, and that it would be good policy to give it up. He said that he had often thought so too, but that the opinion was so unpopular that he had not dared to avow it.

The late Lord Chatham was fond of foreign possessions. He was much against granting absolute independence America, which he said was the fairest jewel in the crown of the British monarch, and his opinion had for some time great weight with the marquis of Lansdown, then Lord Shelburne. On this Dr. Price, who thought as I did on the subject, agreed with me to write our thoughts separately on the subject, and present them to his Lordship. We did so, and some time after he told me that he had shewn my paper to Lord Chatham, but that he was much offended at it. At the conclusion of

Spain and Naples, which are held by the same family, have not one half of their ancient inhabitants; and there cannot be a more certain proof of bad government than this. Their condition is little, if at all, better than that of the Turkish dominions. Portugal, is in much the same state.

Can, then, any person, any friend of liberty and humanity, himself enjoying the blessings of a republican government, wish that any part of his species should continue in this state of degradation and bondage? If not, he must partake in the generous feelings of my correspondent, and earnestly wish for their emancipation. And we may hope that, with the examples of America and France before them, other revolutions may be attended with less bloodshed than those have been.

The revolution of France would, it cannot be doubted,

the war, however, the Marquis made no difficulty of granting what he thought not only necessary, but advantageous to his country, of which he was then prime minister. Had he continued so to this day, his liberal and enlightened policy would have saved England, and all Europe, the horrors of the present, most ruinous and impolitic war.

Tho' I did not accept of a seat in the conventional assembly of France, I had at that time a correspondence with some of the leading men of that country; and believing that my opinion would have some weight, I advised the abandoning the West-Indies, and all their foreign possessions. The answer I received was that they thought as I did on the subject, but that the interest of those who were possessed of property in the islands, would prevent their doing it for the present. This correspondence was continued till the death of the king, against which I gave my advice; but a concurrence of circumstances, the principal of which was the influence of the queen, was fatal to that well meaning man. Of what passed in France after that event I had no information but from newspapers. But it seems I must, notwithstanding this, be answerable for it all.

doubted, have continued to be as peaceable throughout, as it was at its onset, * if the king had been content with the limited power of which the first constitution left him possessed; and had not this unfortunate prince been stimulated by others, more ambitious than himself, to recover the power that he had lost, the war, and the consequent enormities, had not taken place. To those princes, therefore, and their wicked confederacy, are all the enormities to be ascribed.

But it appears to have been the intention of providence to do more for the French nation, and ultimately for all Europe, than they ever thought of doing for themselves, tho' by means which men would not be justified in having recourse to. The national assembly, and the people of France, meant to do nothing more than to limit the power of the crown; but God has given them a government purely republican, and representative, like that of America, without any hereditary powers or honours; and the same benefit, I doubt not, with my correspondent, is intended for all those countries whose kings are at present confederated against France and universal liberty.

If every thing that is *true* and *right* will finally prevent, against whatever is *error* and *wrong*, the cause of monarchy, always tending to despotism, cannot be supported much longer. Independently of wars, which must accelerate the great catastrophe, they all contain within themselves the seeds of their own destruction. The people acquiring knowledge every day, will not much longer bear what they have done. Nor is it

* At the time of the first constitution, when France was a limited monarchy, and those who took the lead in that country would to my own knowledge, have given almost any thing for the friendship and concurrence of England, as, in their opinion, that would have ensured the peace of France, and of all Europe.

it difficult to foresee that the infatuation of the present race of kings, which is remarkably similar to that of Pharaoh, will bring on their destruction in the manner predicted in the scriptures, viz. with violence, and much consequent general calamity.

I shall on this occasion observe, that it is also a manifest error with respect to true policy in those who wish to disarm seditious publications of their sting, to publish themselves as they sometimes do, what appears to them most obnoxious in them; thinking to expose them, and to render the authors odious; not considering to whom they will appear in that light. For while they are read with dislike, and even horror, by some, they may be read with admiration by others. The intercepted Letters, and the paragraphs selected from Mr. Cooper's *Address* are cases in point, as well as several other articles which have been inserted in the Federal Newspapers of this country. The friends of liberty rejoice to see such publications thro' any channel, and especially when it is done at no risk to themselves; and without regarding the *comments*, they attend to the *text*.

The same wretched politicians also do not consider the natural tendency and effect of the *abuse* that they throw out against the friends of liberty and the rights of man. If it have any effect, which is very questionable, it only makes us stand something worse with those with whom it is no object to us to stand well at all, while it recommends us to all those whose good opinion and attachment we really value. What is it to me to be thought ill of by the friends of *Church and king* (with the cry of which my house was burned) in England, or by Mr. Cobbet and his readers in this country. My account with them has been long settled. I am already a bankrupt in their esteem, and no new article in the account can alter the balance for or against me. My part is taken, and my reputation,

as

as far as it is an object with me, is with men of opposite principles, those who are opprobriously called democrats, jacobins, and every thing else of the kind; and to these, and especially those of that class in France, this abuse tends to recommend me.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

*Of the Style of Abuse in the Writings of Mr. Cobbet,
alias Peter Porcupine.*

My Friends, and Neighbours,

IT is commonly said that when *much dirt is thrown, some will stick*; and on this principle I suppose it is that I have been distinguished so often by my principal antagonist Mr. Cobbet, under the signature of *Peter Porcupine*. But he appears to me to have spoiled his part by overacting it. For men may be so covered with dirt that it shall not be known who they are, nor will they be distinguished from one another, like Virgil's complimentary epithets, *fortisque Gyas fortisque Cloanthus*. Besides such coarse abuse as is implied in the words *vilain, rascal, scoundrel, &c. &c.* with which his writings abound, only marks the low education, and the low character and manners of the man that uses them. Such language is never used by gentlemen, or scholars, nor can they return it, tho' it were ever so well merited, not to say that a christian must not return railing for railing. (1 Pet. 3, 9) With
respect

respect to them, therefore it is an unfair weapon. It is like throwing street dirt, which they cannot handle.

It was a thing of course that I should be the object of calumny ever since I wrote in defence of unpopular truths, and unpopular maxims. Indeed, I question whether any person in England (the prime minister for the time being excepted) ever had so much of what is generally termed *abuse*, as myself. It has been pouring out with very little intermission for more than twenty years, and is continued, I find, in my absence. My friends, however, say that it certainly agrees with me. For tho' I was originally of a weak constitution, my health has been improving ever since, and I never was so well as I have been since my arrival in this place, except about three months after my landing, which was before Mr. Cobbet took notice of me. They now say that, old as I am, I bid fair to outlive some of my younger oponents. That sarcastic writings should have this salutary effect, will not be thought so extraordinary, when it is considered that pepper, mustard, salt, and vinegar, have their use in a good dinner, as well as the beef and the pudding. They certainly contribute to a good digestion. But there must be some peculiar charm in Mr. Cobbet's writing, operating unseen and unknown, for I do not think I have seen more than a tenth part of his voluminous publications, and in all of them, I doubt not, he contrives to find a niche for me. I am almost as necessary to him, and as good a *subject* for him, as the king of England is to Peter Pindar. In England, however, where decency and good manners are rarely violated, my antagonists were never of this low class. But the last of the animals that had a kick at the old lion in the fable was the ass.

The profusion and variety of Mr. Cobbet's abuse argues a peculiar genius of the kind unequalled by any thing

thing that I have met with before. In the compass of only three news-papers, and chiefly in one of them, I am called "a hoary hypocrite, a malignant old Tartuff, "a lurking old *illuminatus*, a poor old wretch, a miserable perverse old man, a perverse old hypocrite, "and a vindictive, unnatural, hypocritical wretch." I am "of a factious disposition, an apostle of sedition, "a political viper, with a black rancorous heart, and "smooth tongued whining cart; a cunning sectary, an "ambitious sectary, a baffled focinian, and a Jesuit." I am accused of "falsehood and poisonous malignity, "actuated by cool and premeditated malice." I have "the craft of a sectary, joined to the hatred and malice "of a fiend. My conduct," he says "has been wicked and detestable, that I wish Great Britain revolutionized, and ruined, and indulge a wicked tho' delusive hope of seeing this wish accomplished; that I "never miss an opportunity of endeavouring to render "my countrymen the hate and scorn of the universe; "that for twenty years past I have, from hatred to my "native country, sacrificed my interest, my peace, and "my reputation, to the pleasure of injuring, insulting, and ruining it." In conjunction with others, he calls me "a villain and a scoundrel, * and both "fool and knave. My business in this country," he says, "is of a nature most hostile to its happiness and "independence." It is no wonder, therefore, that he treats me, as he says, "with his unqualified contempt."

His pamphlet on the subject of my emigration, published soon after my arrival, contains the following, among

* I rather wonder that the term *rascal* is not applied to me, as it is to others, in this particular paper, as well as *villain* and *scoundrel*. It is, I doubt not, frequently enough applied to me in other parts of his writings. But such near relations and companions ought not to have been so far separated.

among other falsehoods, "I had been," he says, "for many years an avowed and open enemy to the government and constitution of my country; that in my inflammatory discourses, called *sermons*, the English constitution was openly attacked; and that the doctrines there held forth were subversive of all civil and religious order;" and in his newspaper he says, "my conventicle at Hackney was a most convenient and successful school of treason. I entertained," he says, "the hope of bringing about a revolution in England on the French plan, and that I had no objection to the continuance of tythes in England, provided I came in for a share."

He says that "my public celebration of the French riots and massacres is a convincing proof of my approving them, and that my sending my son to Paris in the midst of them, to request the honour of becoming a French citizen, is another proof of the same that cannot be disputed; that I approved of the unmerciful persecution of the unfortunate and worthy part of the French clergy, men as far surpassing me in piety and ability, as in suffering; that the French constitution is my system, and that sooner than not see it established, he much questions if I would not with pleasure see the massacre of all the human race." But if all mankind were destroyed where is this constitution of mine to be established? As he has not told us where, I must suppose that he meant among bears, wolves, or wild beasts of some kind or other.

With respect to the riots in Bermingham, he says, "that "I was the principal cause of them; that the festival of the commemoration of the French revolution was to celebrate events which were in reality the subject of the deepest horror; that this riot, considered comparatively with what I and my friends wished to stir up, was peace harmony, and gentleness ;

“ nefs ; that the magistrates used every exertion in
 “ their power to quell the riot in its very earliest stage ;
 “ that had the rioters stopped at the destruction of my
 “ meeting house, all had been well. In whatever
 “ light,” he says, “ we view the Birmingham riots, we
 “ can see no object to excite our compassion, except the
 “ inhabitants of the hundred, and the unfortunate ri-
 “ oters themselves ; that the loss of my manuscripts
 “ was little more than a few dirty sheets of paper, and
 “ their destruction a benefit, rather than a loss, both to
 “ myself and the country ; that my philosophical appa-
 “ ratus was a thing of imaginary value only, and ought
 “ not to be estimated at its cost, any more than a col-
 “ lection of shells, or insects, or any other *frivola* of a
 “ virtuoso.”

“ In this country,” he says, “ there is nothing to
 “ fear from me except my disseminating my deistical
 “ principles.” In another place, however, he calls my
 doctrines *atheistical*, tho’ it is impossible that they can
 be both ; and he speaks of “ the infidel philosophy of
 “ Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, Priestley, and the rest
 “ of that enlightened tribe.” To make the group com-
 plete (for the *consistency* of it is no object with him)
 he should have added some distinguished heathens, and
 mahometans as holding the same opinions. “ When I
 “ preached in Philadelphia,” he says, “ I gave up a
 “ share of the pence which I was able to draw out of
 “ the pockets of my hearers for the liberty of preach-
 “ ing in the church of the Universalists,” of which he
 speaks with the greatest contempt.

All this, you will observe, is mere *assertion*, with-
 out any *evidence* whatever ; and therefore my simple
 denial (tho’ I could bring abundant proof of every
 thing that I shall say) may be a sufficient answer.

Now I can say with truth that, in the course of
 more than forty years, I never preached one sermon
 that any of you would have said was *political* ; nor did

I ever

I ever, in any place, or in any form, express a wish for any material change in the English constitution ; and I am confident I have a more sincere respect for my native country, and for this too, than Mr. Cobbet has for any country. My writings shew that I was always an enemy of all civil establishments of religion, but thought that if there was to be one, it should be of *christianity in general*, such as exists in the New-England states ; and then that the church revenues, whatever they were, should be given to all the sects alike.

When I preached at the church of the Universalists, I wished to have no collection made after service, all that was collected was given to the minister of the place ; and when I preached in the hall of the university, only one collection was made to defray the expences that had been incurred. I was glad of the opportunity of doing what I thought to be *good* without any pecuniary benefit. Whether the discourses that I delivered were calculated to do any good those who read them may judge.

My son went to France before the revolution took place, and before any such thing was expected ; nor was any request ever made by myself, or my friends, to be made a French citizen. The second time that he went was in order to be received into the house of a merchant at Nantes, from which place, on account of the troubles in that neighbourhood, he removed to this country.

When the anniversary of the French revolution was celebrated at Birmingham, the constitution of France was a limited monarchy, very much like that of England, and had been solemnly accepted by the king himself. Tho' I approved of that celebration, I neither projected, nor attended it. The magistrates made no serious attempts to quell the riot, but rather promoted

promoted it. * Of the amount of my losses on that occasion I have nothing to add to what will be found in my *Appeal to the people of England* on the subject. In a pecuniary computation it was more than two thousand pounds less than the real value.

This gross abuse comes from a man with whom I never had any intercourse, whom I never offended, or irritated by any reply to his invectives, which have never ceased since I have been in the country; nor should I have noticed them now, but that I find his publications have increasing acceptance and celebrity with the friends of those who have the chief power in this country; so that since the riot in Birmingham is openly approved and praised by him and his supporters, a similar one may be apprehended here, especially if what Mr. Cobbet says be true (and I see no reason to question it) that "he has lived to see the truth of his statements, and the justice of his opinions, respecting me fully and universally acknowledged;" and since a spirit of party runs as high in this country as I ever knew it to do in England. If you believe one half of what Mr. Cobbet says of me, you would be justified, and applauded, for destroying me, as you would for killing a serpent or a wild beast.

Having advanced thus much in my vindication, I shall probably bear in silence (as I have hitherto done with respect to what is past) whatever farther abuse I may be exposed to. What other terms of reproach the English language can furnish I am ignorant of, but I shall expect very soon to find; if not, that more curious changes will be rung on those that have been so often used already, and especially his three favourite

* I have been very credibly informed that Lady Aylesford, wife of the Lord Lieutenant of the county, conversing on the subject of the riots, said "They went farther than we intended."

vourite words, *rascal villain* and *scoundrel*. These have been so much used by him, that I imagine his printer must provide fresh types for the letters of which they consist.

If any fresh accusation be advanced, it must be that I was sent hither as a convict, for theft or robbery on the high way; but that, being favoured, I was permitted to export myself to America, rather than be sent to my friends and old companions at Botany bay; it being thought that there were already dangerous persons enow in that one place. And there will be just as much truth in this, as in any thing that has yet been advanced against me by Mr. Cobbet.

As a part of the general plan of that providence which overrules all things, I am far from complaining of the treatment I have met with in England, or in this country; especially as it has almost always attended the greatest merit, and we cannot expect to have any commodity without the tax that is laid upon it by the laws of nature. In a system in which infinite wisdom and infinite goodness are equally apparent, nothing can eventually be wrong: and toads and vipers are as necessary in the system as horses and sheep; and noxious plants as much as wholesome herbs.

I shall conclude this letter with observing that whatever I may think of the English government; I have such an opinion of the liberality, the good sense, and the good taste, of my countrymen, that I do not believe that any such a newspaper as that of *Peter Porcupine* would meet with any encouragement among the warmest friends of *Church and king* in England,

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

*Of my Religion.**My Friends and Neighbours,*

MR. COBBET calls me sometimes an *unitarian* sometimes a *deist*, sometimes an *atheist*, and always a *hypocrite*. And a great hypocrite I must, indeed, be, if, in reality, I do not believe in the being of a God, or in the truth of christianity, when I have written more in defence of those articles of faith than any other man now living, or almost that ever did live,* and have officiated as a christian minister more than forty years.

I must also have a greater want of common sense than he ascribes to me, to maintain opinions so inconsistent with one another as those above mentioned. An atheist acknowledges no God, and no future state; deists acknowledge the former but few of them the latter, and they believe in no revelation; whereas unitarians deny, indeed, a trinity in God, but they believe in one God, the Father, and in the divine mission of Christ. They believe that he worked miracles by the power of God, that God raised him from the dead, and that he will come again to raise all the dead, and judge the world. The same man cannot, therefore, be at the same time an *atheist*, a *deist*, and, an *unitarian*.
If

* I can only recollect one person who has written more in defence of christianity than myself, and that was an unitarian. I mean Dr. Lardner, with whom I had the happiness to be acquainted, and who, in conjunction with Dr. Fleming, was the publisher of the first of my theological writings.

If I be a *hypocrite*, in pretending only to be no atheist, or deist, while, in reality, I am either the one or the other, what have I got by my hypocrisy ; when, tho' I have been a preacher, as I have observed, more than forty years, my profession has never yielded me half a maintenance ; and here I get nothing at all by it. Men are not at the trouble of acting the hypocrite, and especially for so long a time, for nothing.

It is true that I do not join in the public worship of this place ; but it is because I cannot join in your devotions, which are altogether trinitarian, as they ought to be while you are trinitarians. For it would be absurd to acknowledge Christ to be God, and not to render him the honours of divinity, by praying to him as an omnipresent and omnipotent Being. But tho' I do not worship with you, I have divine service every Lord's day in my own house, which is then open to every body, and where several of you occasionally attend. Now did any of you ever hear me preach any thing like atheism, or deism, or indeed any thing contrary to your own opinions ? And when you have heard me *pray*, could not you join me in every word I said ? If you be christians at all, I am confident you always might. It never was my custom to preach on the controverted subjects of religion, or only on particular occasions. These I discuss in my publications, in which you may see what my opinions on those subjects are, and the arguments I have to advance in support of them.

Had I been permitted to officiate in either of your meeting houses (which I should have done *gratis*, thankful for such an opportunity of being useful among you) you would never have heard from me any thing but the principles of our *common christianity*. And this will furnish topics of discourse in great abundance, and such as are of far greater importance than all the things about which we differ. The substantial duties of the christian life, to inculcate which is, or ought to be, the
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great end of all our preaching, are the same on all our principles ; and do I in my preaching (and I hope I may add in my practice) contradict any of these ?

We all agree in acknowledging the same books of scripture, and we profess to derive our faith from them, tho' we interpret them differently. This, surely, is not atheism, or deism. If I do not believe the divinity of Christ, it is because I do not think it to be the doctrine of the scriptures, and because I cannot help thinking that if Christ, and also the Holy Spirit, be possessed of all the attributes of divinity, equally with God the Father, there must be *three Gods*, and not *one only*, which the scriptures assert, and on which they lay the greatest stress. In this you will not agree with me ; being of opinion that, in some sense or other, *three* may be *one*, and *one three*. But you will not say that because I am not a trinitarian, I am an atheist, or a deist.

You do not call the Jews atheists or deists, because they do not believe the divinity of Moses, or of the Messiah whom they expect. They believe that Moses delivered to them the laws and commands of God ; and therefore they respect them as much as if they had all come from the mouth of God himself. I do the same with respect to all that Christ, speaking in name of God, has delivered to us. He has repeatedly said (John vii. 16, xiv, 24) that *the words which he spake were not his own but the Father's who sent him ; that the Father who was in him, or with him, worked the miracles which proved his divine mission* (John xiv, 10) for that *of himself he could do nothing* (John v. 30) The apostle Peter calls Christ *a man approved of God by signs and wonders which God did by him*, Acts ii, 21, and the apostle Paul says (1. Cor. viii. 6, 1. Tim. ii. v.) *To us there is one God, the Father, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

But tho' I think the clear sense of scripture, such

as is intelligible to the meanest capacity is on my side, I can easily suppose that you see things in a very different light, and that you are as conscientious in differing from me, as I am in differing from you. I, no doubt, wish that you could come to think as I do on these subjects, as you do with respect to me. This is unavoidable in us both, if we lay any stress on our opinions, and have any good will for one another. But I do not obtrude my opinions upon you, or offend you with disputation. Few of you have ever heard me mention the subject of our differences with respect to religion, and then the occasion has never been sought by me. I do not condemn those who act otherwise, but my habits are different; and tho' I have no less zeal, I take a different method of propagating my principles. I have seldom seen any good produced by disputing in conversation. It too often tends to irritate, and tho' men are often silenced in this way they are seldom convinced. But because I am not always talking about religion, do you suppose, with Mr. Cobbet, that I have none?

Mr. Adams, your President, is unquestionably a religious man, and on this account, as well as on many others, I greatly respect him. He knows me well; and do you think he would have attended me constantly, as he did, when I delivered my first set of Discourses in Philadelphia, and have consented that I should dedicate them to him, if he had known, or suspected, me to be an atheist or a deist, and consequently a hypocrite. He entertains no doubt of my being a sincere christian, tho' our opinions may not be exactly the same.

I wish we had all more religion than we have. We should then think more of another world, and make less account of this, and of all things in it, than we now do. It would give us an habitual regard to God, and his providence, respecting both individuals and so-

cieties of mankind, and especially the great and interesting events which are now taking place in the old world. Firmly believing that a wise and good providence superintends all events, and will bring good out of all evil, so that the final issue of the most calamitous events will be glorious and happy, we shall view them as they pass before us not without interest, but with more tranquility, and without ill will towards any part of the human race, even our personal or national enemies.

Whatever you may think in the prime of life, while your spirits are high, and your prospects good, the value of religion at my time of life is beyond all estimation. Without such prospects as religion sets before us the evening of life would be cheerless and gloomy, but with them it is most serene and happy; far more so than any preceding period. I am far, I assure you, from wishing to be young again, tho' I enjoyed that part of life as much as any of you can do.

On this account I regard unbelievers at the close of life with much compassion. And late converts, and nominal christians, who give little attention to the subject, are not much better. It requires *time* before the principles of christianity can be of much use in this respect. An habitual attention must be given to them, so that in every intermission of necessary business they shall, even without any effort, be uppermost in a man's thoughts, affording relief under all his troubles and cares. This state of mind cannot, in the natural course of things, be acquired in a short time. In this respect *faith* is a different thing from mere *conviction*, and admits of degrees, giving consolation and joy in proportion to its strength.

Atheist or deist as I may be considered, and attached as I am to philosophical pursuits, my chief satisfactions are derived from the daily study of the scriptures, and reflections on the momentous subjects that are there proposed to us. Religion is the only effectual support
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under all the troubles of life (and in saying this you know that I *may* speak from experience) as well as in the hour of death. It also tends to make men less ambitious, and to allay the heat of party spirit, which is too often the bane of good neighbourhood, and separates those who would otherwise be happy in a pleasing and beneficial intercourse. If nations, or their governors, were really christians, all mankind would live in peace and friendship with one another.

Call this a *sermon*, if you please, and let Mr. Cobbet call it *cant and hypocrisy*. Only believe me to be, notwithstanding every difference of opinion, religious or political,

My Friends and Neighbours,

your sincere well-wisher,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

Northumberland, Nov. 1. 1799.

P. S. In my next Letters I shall, according to my promise, proceed to inform you what I *think* with respect to the conduct of your administration, and even the constitution itself. But as these are serious and deep subjects, they require to be treated with much caution. And these being ticklish times, it may be prudent to have a consultation of my lawyers on the business. Poor as is the *shed* which Mr. Cobbet says I dignify with the name of a *house*, I should be sorry to exchange it for such lodgings as the liberality of this country assigned to Mr. Lyon, tho' this might gratify Mr. Cobbet as much as my having a place in the poor house in Philadelphia.

SINCE

SINCE this Postscript was sent to the press the following article, reflecting on Mr. Cooper and myself, has appeared in the *Reading Newspaper* of October 26, 1799.

“*Thomas Cooper's* address to the readers of the *Sunbury and Northumberland Gazette*, of which he was Editor, having been re-published in this State, with an introduction approbatory of the piece, a correspondent wishes to know if it be the same *Thomas Cooper*, an Englishman, of whom the following anecdote is related? If it is, every paper devoted to truth, honor and decency, ought to give it a thorough circulation.”

“Not many months ago, it is said, a *Mr. Cooper*, an Englishman, applied to the PRESIDENT of the United States to be appointed “agent for settling the respective claims of the citizens and subjects of this country and Great Britain.” In his letter he informs the PRESIDENT that although he (*Thomas Cooper*,) had been called a Democrat, yet his real political sentiments were such as would be agreeable to the PRESIDENT and government of the United States, or expressions to that effect. This letter was accompanied with another from Dr. *Joseph Priestley*, who did not fail to assure the PRESIDENT, of the pliability of his friend *Cooper's* democratic principles. The PRESIDENT it is said, rejected *Cooper's* application with disdain, and *Priestley's* with still stronger marks of surprise, saying, it is said, as he threw the letter on the table, does he think that I would appoint any Englishman to that important office in preference to an American!—What was the consequence?—When *Thomas Cooper* found his application for a lucrative office under our PRESIDENT rejected he writes in revenge the address which has appeared in print, and Dr. *Priestley* exerted his influence in dispersing this very address, which he must know was the offspring of disappointment and revenge!!!”

“The address is as cunning and insidious a production

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tion as ever appeared in the Aurora, or the old Chronicle, and as for impudence it exceeds, or at least equals Porcupine himself.—*Priestley* and *Cooper* are both called upon to deny the above narrative. A recourse to the letters themselves would establish the accuracy of this anecdote even to a syllable.”

Of the candour and justice of this representation my reader will judge from the tenor of the letters referred to, of which the following are copies.

August 12, 1797.

DEAR SIR,

IT was far from being my intention, or my wish, to trouble you with the request of any favours, tho' it is *now* in your power to grant them; and it is not at all probable that I shall ever take a second liberty of the kind. But circumstances have arisen which, I think, call upon me to do it once, tho' not for myself but a friend. The office of Agent for American claims, was offered, I understand, to Mr. Hall of Sunbury, and he has declined it. If this be the case, and no other person be yet fixed upon, I should be very happy if I could serve Mr. Cooper (a man, I doubt not, of at least equal ability, and possessed of every other qualification for the office) by recommending him. It is true that both he and myself fall, in the language of our calumniators, under the description of *Democrats*, who are studiously represented as enemies to what is called *government* both in England and here. What I have done to deserve that character you well know, and Mr. Cooper has done very little more. In fact, we have both been persecuted for being friends to American liberty, and our preference of the government of this country has brought us both hither. However, were the accusation true, I think the appointment

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ment of a man of unquestionable ability and fidelity to his trust, for which I would make myself answerable, would be such a mark of superiority to popular prejudice as I should expect from you. *I therefore think it no unfavourable circumstance in the recommendation.* That you will act according to your best judgment I have no doubt, with respect to this and other affairs of infinitely more moment, thro' which I am persuaded you will bring the country with reputation to yourself, tho', in circumstances of such uncommon difficulty, perhaps with less ease and satisfaction than I could wish. With my earnest wishes for the honour and tranquility of your Presidency,

I am, Dear Sir,

yours sincerely,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

SIR,

ON my expressing an inclination for the office which Mr. Hall has declined, Dr. Priestley was so good as to offer his services with you on my behalf.

Probably the office will be filled 'ere this letter can reach you : probably there may be objections to nominating a person not a native of the country : probably *the objection mentioned by Dr. Priestley may reasonably be deemed of weight in my instance.* Be all this as it may, I see no impropriety in the present application to be appointed Agent of American claims, for it is still possible I may suppose more weight in the objections than they will be found to deserve. If it should so happen that I am nominated to that office I shall endeavour to merit the character the Doctor has given of me, and your esteem. I am, &c.

THOMAS COOPER.

From

From my letter it will clearly appear that I was far from proposing any dereliction of principles on the part of Mr. Cooper. I should as soon have expected it on the part of Mr. Adams himself. I was also far from intending any affront to Mr. Adams, for whom I always had a very high esteem. I honoured him for his integrity, and respected even what I thought to be his prejudices. Besides, he was then just entered on his office of President, and had not done any thing to offend persons of Mr. Cooper's political principles.

I thought Mr. Cooper singularly well qualified for discharging the duties of the office in question, on account of his knowledge of English law and English commerce, as well as for his acknowledged ability and activity. I also thought that I was giving Mr. Adams an opportunity of serving himself, by shewing his liberality, in favouring a person whose political principles differed from his own, but in a case in which they could not interfere with them. At the same time he would have obliged a person for whom he always professed much esteem, and whom he had honoured with his correspondence and intercourse.

The following observations on the general subject of *appointment to offices*, which I wrote some time ago, will, not, I flatter myself, be thought improperly subjoined here, and may recommend themselves as of some importance to impartial persons of all parties. Let the President in question be either Mr. Adams or Mr. Jefferson.

To have the higher officers of the state, those with whom it may be proper to consult in the general conduct of affairs, as the heads of the several departments, men of the same political principles of the President, could not be complained of. But when *all* offices, even such as are merely lucrative, are confined to one party, it naturally exasperates those of opposite principles, and greatly promotes a spirit of party in the country,

try, and this may proceed so far as to hazard a civil war. It is, therefore, the part of good policy, as well as of magnanimity, to distribute all offices with as equal a hand as possible. Otherwise, instead of being the chief of the nation, a President makes himself the head of a particular party.

Should all the partisans of such a President follow his example, and employ no physician, no carpenter, no mason, no shoemaker, &c. but men of their own political sentiments ; and should those of opposite principles, in self defence, do the same, it would be a state of mutual persecution on account of opinion, an endeavour to exterminate one another by starving, which approaches very nearly to an attempt to effect the same by violence. The only difference is that of taking a town by blockade, or by storm. They are alike operations of *open war*. A President, therefore, who wishes to promote the peace of the country will carefully avoid setting such an example.

ERRATA *et* CORRIGENDA.

(b) signifies from the bottom.

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| p. 14. | l. 11 | (b) <i>for</i> am, <i>read</i> was. |
| Ib. | l. 9 | (b)—from that time—occasionally. |
| p. 14. | l. 5 | —public—political. |
| 28. | l. 2 | —onset—outset. |
| Ib. | l. 7 | (b)—prevent—prevail. |

